

**Rule 251 that replaces Rule 251 (Mountain Races) and Rule 252 (Trail Races)  
of the IAAF Competition Rules**

*(NEW Rule approved by the IAAF Council in force from 1 January 2019)*

## **SECTION IX – CROSS COUNTRY, MOUNTAIN AND TRAIL RACES**

There are extreme variations in conditions in which Cross Country Running, Mountain and Trail Running are practised throughout the world and it is difficult to legislate international standardisation of these events. It must be accepted that the difference between very successful and unsuccessful events often lies in the natural characteristics of the venue and the abilities of the course designer. The following Rules are intended as a guide and incentive to assist Members to develop Cross Country Running, Mountain and Trail Running.

### **RULE 251 Mountain and Trail races**

#### **Part one: General rules**

##### **Course**

1. **(a)** The discipline of Mountain and Trail Running takes place on various types of natural terrain (sand, dirt roads, forest paths, single track footpaths, snow trails etc), and in various kinds of environment (mountains, forests, plains, deserts etc). Races take place mostly on off-road surfaces, however sections of paved surfaces (e.g. asphalt, concrete, macadam etc.) are acceptable as a way to reach or link the trails of the course but should be kept to a minimum. Preferably existing roads and trails should be used.  
**(b)** For Mountain races only, some special exceptions do exist where races are held on a paved surface but are only acceptable when there are large elevation changes on the course.  
**(c)** The course must be marked in such a way that no navigation skills will be required from the athletes.  
**(d)** Trail races have no limits to distance or altitude gain or loss and the course must represent the logical discovery of a region.  
**(e)** Mountain races are traditionally divided into “uphill” and “up & down” races. The average altitude gain or loss can vary from approx. 50 – 250 metres per kilometre, and the distances up to 42.2km.

##### **Start**

2. Mountain and Trail races typically have mass starts. Runners can also start separated by gender or age-related categories.

##### **Safety, Environment**

3. Organising Committees shall ensure the safety of athletes and officials. Specific conditions, such as high altitude, changing weather conditions and available infrastructure should be respected. The event organiser is responsible for taking care for the environment when planning the course, during and after the competition.

##### **Equipment**

4. Mountain and Trail races do not imply the use of a particular technique, alpine or other, nor the use of specific equipment, such as mountaineering equipment. The use of hiking poles could be permitted at the discretion of the Race organisation. The Race Organizer may recommend or impose mandatory equipment due to the conditions expected to be encountered during the race, which will allow the athlete to avoid a situation of distress or, in the case of an accident, to give the alert and wait in safety for the arrival of help.

## *Race organisation*

5. The Organizer shall, prior to the race, publish specific regulations of the race including at minimum:
  - Details of the organiser responsible (name, contact details)
  - Program of the event
  - Detailed information about the technical characteristics of the race: total distance, total ascent / descent, description of the main difficulties of the track
  - A detailed map of the course
  - A detailed profile of the course
  - Course marking criteria
  - Location of the control posts and medical/aid stations (if applicable)
  - Allowed, recommended or mandatory equipment (if applicable)
  - Safety rules to be followed
  - Penalties and disqualification rules
  - Time limit and cut-off barriers (if applicable)

## **Part two: International Technical Rules for Mountain and Trail Races**

### *Scope of application*

6. While strongly recommended for all international championships, the application of the following technical rules is mandatory only in World Championships. For all Mountain and Trail Running events other than World Championships, the specific event rules and/or the national rules shall have precedence. If a Mountain and Trail Running competition is held under "International Technical Rules", it must be specified in the event regulations. In all other cases, if a referee is appointed by a Member, an Area Association or the authority that oversees the competition, this person must ensure compliance with the general rules of Athletics but shall not enforce the following International Technical Rules.

### *Start*

7. The commands for races longer than 400m shall be used (Rule 162.2(b)). In races which include a large number of athletes, five-minute, three-minute and one-minute warnings before the start of the race should be given. A 10s countdown to the start can also be given.

### *Race conduct*

8. If the Referee is satisfied on the report of a judge, or Umpire, or otherwise, that an athlete:
  - has left the marked course thereby shortening the distance to be covered;
  - receives any form of assistance such as pacing, or refreshments outside of the official aid stations,
  - does not comply to any of the specific race regulations;
 he shall be disqualified or get the penalty stated by the specific race regulations.

### *Specific provisions for Trail Races*

9. (a) Sections of paved surfaces shall not exceed 25% of the total course  
 (b) Races are classified by "km-effort"; the km-effort measure is the sum of the distance expressed in kilometres and a hundredth of the vertical gain expressed in meters, rounded to the nearest whole number (for example, the km-effort of a race of 65 km and 3500 m ascent is:  $65 + 3500/100 = 100$ ); accordingly races will be classified as follows:

category	km-effort
XXS	0 – 24
XS	25 – 44
S	45 – 74
M	75 – 114
L	115 – 154
XL	155 – 209
XXL	210 +

- (c) World Championships races shall be based on the Short (S) and the Long (L) categories.:
  - in the Short race the distance must be between 35 and 45 km and the minimum vertical gain 1,500 metres or more;
  - in the Long race the distance must be between 75 and 85 km.
- (d) Competitions shall be based on the concept of self-sufficiency, meaning that the athletes will have to be autonomous between aid stations in terms of gear, communications, food and drink.
- (e) A survival blanket (140x200cm minimum size), a whistle and a mobile phone are the minimum items the athletes have to carry at all times. However the LOC may impose additional mandatory items due to the conditions expected to be encountered during the race.
- (f) Aid stations at official competitions shall be sufficiently spaced out so as to respect the “principle of self-sufficiency”. The maximum total number of aid stations, excluding start and finish line, including water points, shall be no more than the km-effort points of the race divided by 15, rounded to the lower integer (example of a race with a km-effort of 58:  $58/15=3.86$ , which means no more than 3 aid stations, excluding start and finish, are allowed).

*Notes:*

- (i): In a maximum of half of the above aid stations, rounded to the lower integer, food, drinks and personal assistance may be given (e.g. maximum total number of aid stations 3,  $3/2=1.5$ , maximum number of aid stations where food and personal assistance may be given is 1); at the remaining aid stations only drinks, but no food nor personal assistance, may be given.
- (ii): aid stations layout, where personal assistance is allowed, shall be organized in a way that allows each country to have an individual table or allocated space, identified with the flag of the Country (or Territory) and where their official staff will give assistance to the athletes. Tables shall be organized by alphabetical order, and each team is allowed to have a maximum of 2 officials per table.
- (iii): Assistance to the athletes may only be given at complete (food and drinks) aid stations as defined above.

- (g) A finishing position resulting in a tie is permissible when clearly evident by the athletes' intention.

#### *Specific provisions for Mountain Races*

10. Mountain races are classified as follows:
  - “Classic Uphill”
  - “Classic Up & Down”
  - “Vertical”,
  - “Long Distance”
  - Relays
11. In all categories other than Vertical, the average incline should be between 5% (or 50m per km) and 25% (or 250m per km). The most preferable average incline is approximately 10%-15% provided that the course remains runnable. These limits do not apply to the Vertical category, where the incline shall be not less than 25%.
12. World Championships races shall be based on the following categories and distances:
  - “Classic Uphill”: 5 to 6 km for Juniors (men and women); 10 to 12 km for Seniors (men and women)
  - “Classic Up & Down”: 5 to 6 km for Juniors (men and women); 10 to 12 km for Seniors (men and women)
  - “Vertical”: it should have at least 1,000m of positive vertical elevation and be measured in a certified manner to an accuracy of +/- 10m.
  - “Long Distance”: the race distance should not exceed 42.2 km and the nature of the course maybe mainly uphill or up and down. The total amount of ascent in the race should exceed

2,000m. The men's winning time should be between two and four hours and less than 20% of the distance should be paved surfaces.

- “Relays”: Any course or team combinations, included mixed gender/age group, are possible as long as they are defined and communicated in advance. Distance and elevation gain of each individual leg should respect the parameters of the “Classic” categories.

*Note (i): Classic Uphill and Classic Up & Down events traditionally alternate at each edition of the World Championships.*

- 13.** Water and other suitable refreshments shall be available at the start and finish of all races. Additional drinking / sponging stations should be provided at suitable places along the course.